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[Cyberbullying: What Schools Can do to Stop It](http://www.scholastic.com/browse/article.jsp?id=3754975)

By Emily Richmond

Recently Elizabeth Englander held a workshop to educate her community about cyberbullying after the suicide of 15-year-old Phoebe Prince. The turnout was hundreds of more people than they planned for. More and more communities around the United States are putting up regulations around cyberbullying and what to do to end this epidemic. One solution offered is to treat cyberbullying like an epidemic, make all people aware of it, students, teachers, physicians, law enforcement.

States are now tacking on rules for identifying cyberbullying. In some states, it is a crime to bully online. Some states have the right to suspend a child if they are caught cyberbullying. And in Missouri it is a felony to be caught being a bully on the internet. These harsh punishments are a result of nearly half of students aged 15-16 saying that they have been personally attacked via the internet or texting.

New laws are also defining what qualifies as bullying. Laws are looking at social media and texting as well as email. It is also hard to define who should step in to correct cyberbullying. Generally, parents are in change of their students, but it is falling more on teacher’s shoulders to step up and fix what is wrong. A teacher should inform the principal of the school, the parents of all students involved, and in some cases, even inform law enforcement of cyberbullying instances.

I worry about cyberbullying in the classroom. It is very easy to say horrible things when you have time to craft a post or comment. It is also so easy to take the tone of a message the wrong way and perhaps create a problem when there isn’t one. I am very happy I was one of the last groups of people not to heavily use social media in high school.

My favorite quote from the article was this, "There should be a process of holding kids accountable, and reinforcing positive behavior should be consistent whether you're talking about cyberspace, the playground, or the lunchroom," Cowan says. "We need to be teaching kids that the cyberworld is not an alternative reality. It's as real as their regular classrooms. Schools can play a critical role, in partnership with parents, in teaching kids good Internet skills. Helping them understand the consequences of being hurtful to anybody is part of that process."

Accountability is a hard lesson to learn, but if we start teaching our students right away and making them aware that their actions have great consequences maybe we can take a step in the right direction. I don’t believe bullying will ever be wiped off the map completely, but there is a lot we can do to make sure it’s lessened. Even if it saves one life, it’s worth it to have cyberbullying laws.